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ABSTRACT

In late fall 1986, questionnaires were mailed to all 3,327 students who had received a degree or certificate from a Connecticut community college the previous spring. The study focused on the graduates' characteristics, attendance patterns, employment status, and satisfaction levels. A total of 1,438 surveys, or 43%, were returned, with the response rates at the individual colleges ranging from 33% to 65%. Study findings included the following: (1) half of the respondents indicated that they had attended their community college primarily on a full-time basis, yet currently, nearly 75% of the state's community college students attend on a part-time basis; (2) 51% of the respondents attended both day and evening classes, 28% attended only day classes, and 21% attended evening classes exclusively; (3) 47.1% were attending college to prepare for a job, 21% to prepare for transfer, and 16% to prepare for a career change; (4) compared to day students, evening students were more likely to be attending to improve skills in their present jobs or for personal enrichment and less likely to be preparing for transfer; (5) at the time of the survey, 54% of the respondents were employed full-time, 9.2% were employed part-time, while 31% were attending school; and (6) respondents expressed the most satisfaction with the quality of instruction, faculty availability/interest, and their overall experience at the college, and the least satisfaction with job placement services and student activities and programs. (AAC)

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1986 GRADUATE SURVEY

The COMMUNITY COLLEGES of CONNECTICUT

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INTRODUCTION

For the past ten years the Central Office for the Regional Community Colleges has distributed a survey to its graduates. The instrument was developed by the Institutional Research Committee (IRC) under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Elterich, Director of Research and Information Systems. The IRC, whose members represent each campus and the Central Office, periodically review and update the questionnaire.

This report contains the results of the latest version of the questionnaire and does not attempt to compare past years' results to this year's. The data were collected by each campus and subsequently analyzed on the system data center computers.

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1986 GRADUATE SURVEY REPORT

I. Who responded:

In late fall 1986, questionnaires were mailed to all 3,327 students who had received a Community College degree or certificate the previous Spring. A total of 1,438 surveys, (43%), were returned with varying college response rates of 33% to 65%. This variation may be due to local differences in mailing/follow-up methodologies.[1] For example, not all of the colleges sent a follow-up questionnaire to non-respondents. Nevertheless the results of the 1986 survey were very interesting and informative. There were even a few surprises.

II. Characteristics of the Respondents:

The respondents were comprised of 373 men, (28%), and 977 women, (72%). This represents a slightly higher percentage of women responding than were represented in the total population of graduates (66%).

The respondents ranged in age from 19 to 75 with an average age of 30 years. While most of the respondents were white,(90%), the ratio of minorities to whites was virtually identical to that of the entire population of graduates.

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[1] It is anticipated that a standardized methodology across the system will be employed in 1987 in order to generate a more representative sample of the population. In addition we hope to be able to incorporate student identifiers next year so that comparisons can be made between responding and non-responding graduates.

III. Attendance Characteristics:

Half of the respondents indicated they had attended primarily on a full-time basis yet nearly 75% of the students enrolled in the Community College system are enrolled part-time. While this may suggest that more full-time students will complete a degree or certificate, it is important to note that attendance data are not available for 57% of the graduates. It may be that students who had attended full-time were more likely to return a questionnaire

Most of the respondents attended classes both day and evening (51%) while 28% attended day classes exclusively and 21% attended evening classes exclusively. When asked what their primary reason for attending was, many indicated job preparation (664 or 47.1%). Others attended primarily to prepare for a career change (226 or 16%), to improve skills in their present job (103 or 7%) or for "personal enrichment" (120 or 9%). The remaining 298 respondents (21%) attended primarily to prepare for college transfer. Of those 298, 256 ,or 86%, were enrolled in another college at the time of the survey. Table 1 depicts the location of the transfer college. (See Appendix A for a breakdown of this table by college).

Table 1

Location of Responding Graduates With Primary Goal of College Transfer

COLLEGE	NUMBER	PERCENT
UConn	33	12.9
CCSU	59	23.0
ECSU	24	9.4
SCSU	35	13.7
WCSU	10	3.9
Other College	95	37.1
	256	100

When time-of-day attended is cross-tabulated with primary objective for attending, the graduates who attended evening classes exclusively are consistently different from the other two groups, i.e., those who attended day classes exclusively and those who attended both day and evening classes. For example, over half of the respondents who attended day classes did so primarily to prepare for job opportunities as compared to only 37% of the students attending in the evening. The evening students were more likely to be attending primarily to improve skills in their present jobs or for personal enrichment. These same evening students were also less likely than the other two groups to be attending primarily to prepare for college transfer, see Table 2.

TABLE 2

Primary Objective For Attending a Community College
By
Time-of-Day Attended

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE	Time-of-Day Attended: DAY CLASSES	EVENING CLASSES	DAY AND EVENING	
PREPARE FOR JOB	172 (12%)	145 (10%)	381 (26%)	698 (48%)
CAREER CHANGE	41 (3%)	79 (5%)	112 (8%)	232 (16%)
IMPROVE SKILLS	6 (0.41%)	65 (4%)	33 (2%)	104 (7%)
TRANSFER CREDIT	76 (5%)	59 (4%)	174 (12%)	309 (21%)
PERSONAL ENRICHMENT	15 (1%)	49 (3%)	56 (4%)	120 (8%)
TOTALS	310 (21%)	397 (27%)	756 (52%)	1463* (100%)

@ Percentages above 1% are rounded to the nearest whole number.

* 50 respondents (3%) did not respond to one or both of these items and therefore are not included in the table.

IV. Employment data:

A majority of the responding graduates reported being currently employed full-time (773 or 54.2%) while an additional 9.2% (131) reported being employed part-time. Some of the graduates indicated they were students (169 or 12%) while another 276 (19%) reported they were both employed and students. It is interesting to note that 256 of the graduates attended community college with the intention of transfering to another college and yet an additional 189 have continued their education. Most of the remaining respondents were homemakers (48 or 3.4%). Only 2% of the graduates responding indicated they were either unavailable for or were looking for employment. Table 3 illustrates a comparison of the respondents' employment status while in attendance with their employment status currently. A majority of the respondents are currently employed full-time and had worked either full-time or part-time while attending.

TABLE 3

Employment Status While Attending a Community College
By
Current Employment/Educational Status

		Employment Status While Attending			
		WORKED FULL TIME	WORKED PART TIME	NOT EMPLOYED	
CURRENT STATUS	EMPLOYED FULL-TIME	**447** (32%)@	**267** (19%)	**51** (4%)	**765** (54%)
	EMPLOYED PART-TIME	**11** (0.78%)	**89** (6%)	**29** (2%)	**129** (9%)
	EMPLOYED+ STUDENT	**127** (9%)	**135** (10%)	**12** (0.85%)	**274** (20%)
	STUDENT	**14** (1%)	**81** (6%)	**72** (5%)	**167** (12%)
	HOMEMAKER	**8** (0.57%)	**13** (0.92%)	**24** (2%)	**45** (3%)
	LOOKING EMPLOYMENT	**5** (0.35%)	**7** (0.50%)	**7** (0.50%)	**19** (1%)
	UNABLE FOR EMPLOYMENT	**0** -	**2** (0.14%)	**8** (0.60%)	**10** (0.71%)
	TOTALS	**612** (43%)	**594** (42%)	**203** (14%)	**1409*** (100%)

@ Percentages above 1% are rounded to the nearest whole number.
* 29 respondents (2%) did not respond to one or both of these items and therefore are not included in the table.

V. Attendance Comparisons:

Tables 4 through 7 compare students who had attended part-time with students who had attended full-time. As would be expected, the majority of full-time students attended both day and evening classes (435 or 63% of the full-time students) while the majority of part-time students attended evening classes exclusively (363 or 51% of the part-time students), see Table 4.

TABLE 4

Part-time/Full-time Status
by
Time of Day Attendance

		Time of Day Attended			
		DAY CLASSES	EVENING CLASSES	DAY OR EVENING	
STATUS	FULLTIME	223 (16%)@	32 (2%)	435 (31%)	690 (49%)
	PARTTIME	69 (5%)	363 (26%)	276 (20%)	708 (51%)
		292 (21%)	395 (28%)	711 (51%)	1398*

@ Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

* 40 respondents did not respond to one or both of these items and therefore are not included in the table.

Of those students who had attended full-time, most (423 or 61% of the full-time students) were employed part-time and of those who had attended part-time, most (449 or 64% of the part-time students) were employed full-time, see Table 5.

TABLE 5

Part-time/Full-time Status
by
Employment While In Attendance

Employment While in Attendance

		EMPLOYED FULLTIME	EMPLOYED PARTTIME	NOT EMPLOYED	
STATUS	FULLTIME	**158** (11%)	**423** (30%)	**118** (8%)	**699** (50%)
	PARTTIME	**449** (32%)	**166** (12%)	**83** (6%)	**698** (50%)
		607 (43%)	**589** (42%)	**201** (14%)	**1397**

Interestingly, there was virtually no difference between the percent of men who attended full-time and the percent of women who attended full-time. This was also true for the percent of men and women who attended part-time, see Table 6. For example, 49% of the men attended full-time and 51% attended part-time, likewise, 51% of the women attended full-time and 49% attended part-time.

TABLE 6

Part-time/Full-time Status
by
Gender

Gender

		WOMEN	MEN	
STATUS	FULLTIME	**490** (37%)	**183** (14%)	**673** (50%)
	PARTTIME	**474** (35%)	**190** (14%)	**664** (50%)
		964 (72%)	**373** (28%)	**1337** (14%)

The gender information was broken down further by whether the students had attended primarily day, evening, or day and evening classes. Again, there was virtually no difference between men and women who were attending full-time, i.e., around 62% of the men attended primarily day and evening classes as compared to 64% of the women. Similarly 33% of the full-time men attended day classes exclusively as compared to 32% of the women.

There was a difference however for part-time students. A majority of the men students, 63%, attended evening classes exclusively as compared to 46% of the part-time women. More part-time women were attending courses during the day (54%) than part-time men (37%). These differences may be due to child care responsibilities, job responsibilities and the relationship of these responsibilities to the availability of time segments in which to take courses. For example, 61% of the male graduates who responded were employed fulltime while attending as compared to 36% of the women respondents.

Table 7 presents a breakdown of full-time vs. part-time attendance by race. Racial status has virtually no effect on whether a student will attend part-time or full-time.

TABLE 7

Part-time/Full-time Status
by
Race

		Race				
		WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	OTHER	
STATUS	FULLTIME	620 (44%)	45 (3%)	24 (2%)	6 (0.43%)	695 (50%)
	PARTTIME	635 (45%)	37 (3%)	22 (2%)	9 (0.64%)	703 (50%)
		1255 (89%)	82 (6%)	46 (4%)	15 (1%)	1398

VI. Satisfaction Levels

A number of items on the graduate survey asked respondents to rate 18 various aspects and services of their particular community college. The rating score for each item ranged from 1, indicating highly satisfied, to 4, indicating highly dissatisfied. Table 8 provides a listing of these items as they appeared on the questionnaire with the number of graduates who responded to each item, N, and the overall Mean score for each item. The lower the score, the more satisfied the graduates were with that aspect or service.

The item most favorably rated was the students' overall experience at college. The mean of 1.60 suggests that the respondents were moderately satisfied with their community college experience. The item with the least favorable response was job placement services. Here the mean score was 1.99. Items related to faculty, i.e., quality of instruction and faculty availability were among the most highly rated items by graduates.

Table 8

Levels of Satisfacton

ITEM	N	MEAN
Admissions Info & Assistance	1376	1.74
Schedule/Availability of Courses	1397	1.95
Variety of Courses	1382	1.92
Advising for Course Selection	1234	1.94
Development/Remedial Courses	513	1.84
Academic Support Programs	562	1.87
Quality of Instruction	1390	1.64
Faculty Availability/Interest	1362	1.63
Your Academic or Career Program	1349	1.70
Counseling Services	964	1.87
Financial Aid Services	468	1.79
Campus Health Services	229	1.95
Library Facilities	1226	1.85
College Location/Facility	1372	1.73
Student Activities & Programs	722	1.97
Preparation for Transfer	657	1.96
Job Placement Services	392	1.99
Your Overall Experience at College	1390	1.60

An overall Mean satisfaction score was computed for the respondents by totaling their non-zero responses to the items and dividing by the number of items. Again, this score could range between 1, indicating high satisfaction, and 4, indicating high dissatisfaction. The overall satisfaction score for 1408 graduates was 1.81.

A similar score was computed for each college. Table 9 provides a listing of the colleges with the number of responding graduates from each college, N, and the overall satisfaction score for that college. There was very little variation in the satisfaction scores for each college with scores ranging from 1.72 to 1.86.

Table 9

Satisfacton Score by College

COLLEGE	N	SCORE
Asnuntuck	86	1.80
Greater Hartford	128	1.86
Housatonic	89	1.82
Manchester	229	1.82
Mattatuck	174	1.80
Middlesex	155	1.77
Mohegan	120	1.83
Northwestern	81	1.77
Norwalk	123	1.80
Quinebaug Valley	52	1.72
South Central	71	1.83
Tunxis	98	1.77

CONCLUSION

A total of 1438 surveys were returned by the 1986 graduates of Connecticut's Community Colleges. Most of the respondents were women (977). The average age of the respondents was 30 and most (90%) were white.

Well over half, 70%, indicated that their primary reason for attending a community college was in someway job related, i.e., for job preparation, for a career change, or for improving skills in their present jobs. However, students who primarily attended in the evening were more likely to be attending to improve current job skills or for "personal enrichment" whereas day students tended to attend primarily for job preparation. As would be expected, the majority of full-time students had attended both day and evening classes while the majority of part-time students attended evening classes exclusively.

A number of items on the questionnaire asked respondents to rate 18 various aspects and services of their community college in terms of their level of satisfaction with that aspect or service. The most favorably rated item was the students' overall experience at college. Items related to faculty, i.e., quality of instruction and faculty availability, were also highly rated by the students.

A majority of the responding graduates reported being currently employed either full-time (54%) or part-time (9.2%). Many reported both being employed and attending school (19%).

APPENDIX A

Location of Graduates
by
Community College of Graduation
for
Students whose primary goal was Transfer

COLLEGE	UCONN	CCSU	ECSU	SCSU	WCSU	OTHER	TOTAL
ASCC	1	7	1	0	0	2	11
GHCC	0	9	1	0	0	3	13
HOCC	1	1	1	6	2	12	23
MACC	11	10	7	0	0	5	33
MTCC	0	7	0	4	3	2	16
MXCC	2	8	3	8	1	8	30
MOCC	3	1	4	0	0	12	20
NWCC	6	8	1	3	1	17	36
NKCC	2	0	0	5	3	23	33
QVCC	2	0	5	0	0	5	12
SCCC	1	1	0	8	0	1	11
TXCC	4	7	1	1	0	4	17
TOTALS	**33**	**59**	**24**	**35**	**10**	**94**	**255**

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